

VERSIONING VIOLENCE

On Gender, Genetics, and Jealousy in Adalbert Stifter's "Mappe"

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Abstract

Stifter's re-writing process of "Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters" is often rendered as a sublimation-story: in the course of four versions Stifter diminishes jealousy as a theme and allows his protagonist Augustinus to mature into an even-tempered man. However, this article shows that jealousy remains a latent force that steers Stifter's editorial work on the text: negative affects are transposed into more abstract textual registers – most importantly, the economy of character. The female lead Margarita is progressively reduced to a minor character: Margarita loses her voice, and becomes entangled in a plot-line of romantic betrayal, which turns into an allegory of jealous reading, raising questions of doubt and belief.

Der Schreib- und Überarbeitungsprozess von Stifters „Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters“ wird oft als Sublimierungsgeschichte erzählt: Innerhalb von vier Versionen bringt Stifter das Thema Eifersucht zum Verschwinden und lässt den Protagonisten Augustinus zu einem ausgeglichenen Mann heranwachsen. Dieser Artikel zeigt, dass Eifersucht eine Kraft bleibt, die Stifters Textrevisionen aus der Latenz lenkt, so dass negative Affekte in abstraktere Textregister transponiert werden; diese Verschiebung von Aggression wird vor allem an der Ökonomie der Charaktere spürbar: Die weibliche Protagonistin Margarita verkommt zu einem Nebencharakter, verliert ihre Stimme und verstrickt sich in einem Liebesbetrug – eine Allegorie eifersüchtigen Lesens, die Fragen bezüglich Zweifel und Glauben aufwirft.

I. Against Sublimation

Every author is accounted for with certain paradigms and in the case of the Austrian writer Adalbert Stifter the paradigm is 'sublimation.'¹ This hardly qualifies as a critical insight, given that sublimation is what *every* artist is supposed to achieve through their work, according to Freud's early theory of sublimation.² Yet in the critical discourse on Stifter's writing-process, the paradigm of sublimation offers not merely a psychological explanation of the coming-into-being of the artwork but is a further-reaching textual-genetic principle, at

¹ I would like to thank Christiane Frey, Daniel Hoffman-Schwartz, Arnd Wedemeyer, and Zachary Sng for inviting me to present on this topic at the truly excellent workshop "Philological Times" (ICI Berlin, 2018); I owe thanks also to the graduate students of the seminar "Affects of Realism" at Princeton University for reading "Die Mappe" with me. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Claudia Hein for an amazingly efficient editorial process as well as to the two anonymous readers for invaluable comments.

² Sigmund Freud: Der Dichter und das Phantasieren [1907], in: Ibid.: Gesammelte Werke, ed. Anna Freud a.o., vol. 7, Frankfurt/Main 1942, pp. 213–223, here: pp. 213–214. In the following, Freud's "Gesammelte Werke" will be abbreviated as GW, followed by volume and page numbers.

once entering into the text as a thematic dimension and shaping the relation between the various text-versions. Following the editors of the historical-critical edition, Stifter has the “tendency to extenuate, to narrate in a neutral manner, to conceal emotions, [...] to gradually mitigate or totally eradicate any expressions of affect”.³ To say that Stifter “gradually mitigate[s]” affect carries the same implications as Freud’s early concept of sublimation in that it assumes the existence of an original aggression that is translated in turn into asexual, non-aggressive, and thus socially acceptable modes of expression.⁴ This somewhat facile idea of sublimation is an easy target – Nietzsche already mocks the pious phantasy of simply ‘doing away’ with aggression;⁵ Freud himself later alters aspects of his theory and post-Freudian psychoanalysis from the likes of Deleuze & Guattari and Lacan will still distance itself from its father’s claims that desire is original rather than produced and that sexual aggression can be eliminated.

Still, the phantasy of bringing aggression down to zero survives and thereby in fact comes to *participate* – qua denial – in the violence that it aspires to negate. In the case of Stifter and his readers, this violence is gendered and the failure to acknowledge it bears a misogynist mark. In the following, I invite the reader to rethink and retheorize sublimation in a more nuanced, textual, and critical manner by examining, via an analysis of Stifter’s textual genetics, in what sense sublimated aggression remains aggression nonetheless. For this purpose, we will trace the aggressive residues of the so-called literary sublimation-process in the treatment of characters between the four versions of “Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters” and ask the following questions: Which character gets to be depicted as an exemplum of sublimation? Which other character gets ‘killed off’ in this process? And finally, what is the context from which the latter, editorial aggression arises?

³ Adalbert Stifter: Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe, ed. Alfred Doppler, Wolfgang Frühwald, vol. 4/4, Stuttgart 1978 ff., pp. 45–47. In the following Stifter’s “Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe” will be abbreviated as HKG, followed by volume and page numbers. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

⁴ The early Freud defines sublimation as the “displace-ability” (“Verschiebbarkeit”) of an “originally sexual aim towards another, not sexual one” (“Die ‘kulturelle’ Sexualmoral und die moderne Nervosität” [GW 7, 150]); see also similar definitions of sublimation in “Die infantile Sexualität” (GW 5, 107) and “Bruchstücke einer Hysterie-Analyse” (GW 5, 210). I recommend Robert Pfaller’s overview of psychoanalytical theories of sublimation in his essay: Die Sublimierung und die Schweinerei: Theoretischer Ort und kulturkritische Funktion eines psychoanalytischen Begriffs, in: *Psyche* 63, 2009, no. 7, pp. 621–650.

⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche: Zur Genealogie der Moral [1887], in: *Ibid.*: Kritische Studienausgabe, ed. Giorgio Colli, Mazzino Montinari, vol. 5, Frankfurt/Main 2002.

II. Sublimation and Textual Genetics

For any scholar of German with the philological ambition of mastering text-versions, Stifter's "Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters" presents a dream-arena because of its availability in no less than four versions: the first "Journalfassung" stems from 1841/42, the second "Studienfassung," from 1847; in the very moment this latter version was published in the story-collection "Studien," Stifter had already started re-writing the story into a novel (HKG 6/4, 11) and he kept on working on this third (unpublished) "Lesefassung" for twenty years, until in 1864 he started a fourth version, which he kept on modifying until his death in 1868. The protagonist's name in "Die Mappe" is 'Augustinus' – the name of Stifter's beloved grandfather as well as a broad hint that Stifter intended the text as a conversion-story, in which an unhappy love prompts a young, impulsive man to work on becoming a serene human being, a charitable doctor.

What is truly remarkable, however, is that this development is mirrored and extended in the relation between the different text-versions because Augustinus' character as well as the language at large appear more and more apathetic. In this sense, "Die Mappe" functions as a *mise-en-abyme*: four micro-coming-of-age-stories forming a larger macro-story, which creates the fiction that Augustinus would mature not just in *one* story but over four versions. The same goes for the author insofar as Stifter himself referred to "Die Mappe" as his "favorite child" (HKG 6/4, 32) and, in Diltheian fashion, as "such a beautiful side of my soul" (HKG 6/4, 31: "Eine gar so schöne Seite meiner Seele"). And indeed, in his essay "Über Stand und Würde des Schriftstellers," Stifter named as one of the writer's most urgent tasks the necessity "to bring his own character to the utmost purity and perfection" (HKG 8/1, 38), guided by moderation or perhaps sublimation.

While the four versions of "Die Mappe" amount to a text-corpus of about a thousand pages, I will concentrate on the chapter "Margarita," which is about an incident that will become the catalyst for Augustinus' conversion – the story of a possible betrayal through Margarita, a story of broken trust: Augustinus, a student of medicine, and Margarita, the daughter of the neighboring colonel (*Obrist*), have become engaged when a young man of rare appeal appears on the scene (soon to be named as Margarita's cousin Rudolph). The jealous Augustinus questions Margarita's commitment to him, which again causes her to end the engagement. At this point, Augustinus decides to prove himself worthy and to become a tranquil being who dedicates his energy to the common good. At the end of the first two versions, Margarita and Augustinus marry after she has apologized to Augustinus for her earlier rebuff (HKG 1/2, 101; HKG 1/5, 228–229). Thus goes the core-story. Three things change in the subsequent versions: first, what Augustinus witnesses between Margarita and his rival; second, his reaction to what he sees; third, Margarita's reaction to his reaction.

The scholarly literature is absorbed in documenting, throughout the versions, the sublimation of the male protagonist as related by the male narrator, concluding that, whereas the first version describes Augustinus' suicide attempt in detail, in the last ones traces of auto-aggression have been eradicated, as e.g. Albrecht Koschorke and Zachary Sng show.⁶ And yet this view is in tension with some accounts given by scholars who examine the fourth and last version of "Die Mappe": Erika and Martin Swales, for instance, alert us to "the cracks in a text whose structural and thematic aim is solidity. And once these cracks begin to appear, the reader will become aware that the novel as a whole is precariously poised".⁷ Likewise, Jochen Berendes objects that those scholars who describe a teleological journey of "Die Mappe" to classical style, a point of "closure" and "harmonious integration" base their argument on stylistic parameters alone but what remained athwart these inquiries were the contradictions upsetting the last version, among them the "failure on the level of character-consciousness".⁸ Indeed, the main characters and their relations to each other – as well as their author's relation to them – become progressively more and more enigmatic, which is especially true for the only main female character, Margarita. Yet tackling this program with Freud, as does Berendes, cannot but reaffirm the masculine-heterosexual ideology of "Die Mappe".

III. How to Spoil a Female Character

Stifter-studies has largely avoided the question of gender and, what's more, the few studies of gender in Stifter have been fairly uncritical in nature.⁹ In recent years some studies have emerged – authored by Christian Begemann, Eva Blome, Eric Downing, and Sabine Schmidt – that map out in a more critical fashion the ways in which Stifter employs female characters: as catalysts for the male protagonist's socialization.¹⁰ The female character has the function of

⁶ Albrecht Koschorke: *Bewahren und Überschreiben. Zu Adalbert Stifters Roman "Witiko"*, in: *Vergessene Texte*, ed. Aleida Assmann, Michael C. Frank, Konstanz 2004, pp. 139–158, here: p. 152; Zachary Sng: *Not Forgotten: On Stifter and Peirce*, in: *MLN* 121, 2006, no. 3, pp. 631–646, here: pp. 632–634.

⁷ Erika and Martin Swales: *Adalbert Stifter: A Critical Study*, Cambridge 1984, p. 133.

⁸ Jochen Berendes: *Ironie – Komik – Skepsis. Studien zum Werk Adalbert Stifters*, Tübingen 2009, p. 73.

⁹ See Dagmar Lorenz' statement "In Stifter, woman is first of all human being, person, and personality" (*ibid.*: *Stifters Frauen*, in: *Colloquia Germanica* 15, 1982, no. 4, pp. 305–320, here: p. 307).

¹⁰ With the caveat that 'socialization' for Stifter is synonymous with sexual disciplining, as Sabine Schmidt points out (*ibid.*: *Das domestizierte Subjekt. Subjektconstitution und Genderdiskurs*, St. Ingbert 2004, p. 433); Christian Begemann: *Die Welt der Zeichen. Stifter-Lektüren*, München 1995; Eva Blome: *Gender*, in: *Stifter-Handbuch: Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, ed. Christian Begemann, Davide Giurato, München 2017, pp. 339–342.

bringing about change in the male character but is 'herself' denied change because any sense of temporality would include "sexual maturation," which has to be prevented at all costs for any female character, as Eric Downing argues with reference to Margarita, among others.¹¹ As a consequence, Stifter's female characters strike one as fungible or even invisible. This is where the "Mappe"-cycle affords us a rare opportunity; it harbors an uncommonly rich data-supply, putting us in position to investigate Stifter's long-term editorial decisions: how to portray the female character in comparison to the male protagonist? How to shape her voice? How much literary-narrative space should she occupy? What kind of position should she inhabit within the plot? These kinds of decisions matter, as Eve Sedgwick outlines in her analysis of Henry James' "The Beast in the Jungle":

Permissibly, the novel's real imaginative and psychological energies focus entirely on the hero. Impermissibly – and here the structure of the novel itself exactly reproduces the depredations of its hero – there is a moralized pretense at an equal focus on a rounded, autonomous, imaginatively and psychologically invested female protagonist, who, however, far from being novelistically "desired" in herself, is really, transparently, created in the precise negative image of the hero – created to be the single creature in the world who is most perfectly fashioned to be caused the most exquisite pain and intimate destruction by him and him alone.¹²

Stifter and James are equally perfidious when it comes to sadistic phantasies about female characters, and more specifically the sublimation-paradigm has successfully safeguarded Stifter from investigations of negative affect, prompting Wolfgang Matz to fault Stifter-scholarship for its "palliatives, idyllic stylization, and lack of critique".¹³ Indeed, the aggressions of the (presumably humorless) Austrian writer toward the female characters in "Die Mappe" are so gruesome they actually border, like those of James, on the comical: Margarita's mother dies a death that is violent but nonetheless also *quiet*, out of 'considerateness' towards her husband; the husband then shoots – also out of considerateness – her beloved lap dog (*Schoßbündchen*), whose life she saved through her own death by cushioning a blow with her own body. Stifter's wife Amalia

¹¹ Eric Downing: Common Ground: Conditions of Realism in Stifter's 'Vorrede', in: *Colloquia Germanica* 28, 1993, no. 1, pp. 35–53, here: p. 43.

¹² Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick: The Beast in the Closet: James and the Writing of Homosexual Panic, in: *Ibid.*: Epistemology of the Closet, Berkeley 1990, pp. 182–212, here: p. 198.

¹³ Wolfgang Matz: Gewalt des Gewordenen. Adalbert Stifters Werk zwischen Idylle und Angst, in: *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 63, 1989, no. 4, pp. 715–750, here: p. 749.

had two such beloved *Schoßhündchen* herself.¹⁴ Later in the text, Margarita's father ("The Gentle Colonel"; *Der sanftmütige Obrist*), upon hearing that his daughter is breaking things off with Augustinus, asks him to stay so that Augustinus can, for 'pedagogical' reasons, read alongside Margarita the father's detailed account of the death of Margarita's mother. Not even Dante could come up with a crueller punishment for *women who break up with men* than having to study, together with the recent ex, their mother's death.¹⁵

Thus Wolfgang Lukas warns that Augustinus' "gentleness" can be achieved only "at the price of losing all his erotic desire and the latent aggression towards the other sex is its necessary correlate"; Lukas examines this aggression against the female on the level of narration, finding it in the vanishing of Margarita (she goes away for three years), which means that Margarita becomes a narrated entity rather than an acting character, and is replaced by the statue of St. Margaretha.¹⁶ There are other aggressions that are still quieter because they occur *between* the different versions. This is the case for the space that the Margarita-character gets to inhabit: during the course of four versions, the Margarita-chapter shrinks by fifty percent, becoming 'anorexic,' with Margarita losing her voice in the process. She becomes a minor character in a chapter named after her. Alex Woloch describes the phenomenon of the "minor character" in 19th-century novels as the "appearance of a disappearance":¹⁷

¹⁴ Stifter informs Amalia in a letter from Aug. 28, 1841 about Muffi's death, with not just a bit of competitiveness: "Aber denke, daß Du noch mich hast, und daß dich auf der ganzen Welt niemand so liebt, als ich Dich" (Adalbert Stifter: Briefe, ed. Friedrich Seebaß, Tübingen 1936, pp. 69–70, here: p. 70). With Alfred Winterstein, who reads Stifter's perpetual worries that his wife may be sick or dead as "death-wishes" (ibid.: Adalbert Stifter. Persönlichkeit und Werk. Eine tiefenpsychologische Studie, Vienna 1946, p. 106), one could interpret the image of Margarita's dead mother with the *erschossenen Schoßhund* on her lap as a punning phantasy about Amalia.

¹⁵ Stifter's universe still has crueller acts to offer against young women: the story-line in "Turmalin" of the hydrocephalic girl whose jealous father demands from her to narrate to him repeatedly his own death as well as the perdition of his unfaithful wife, the girl's mother; similar examples are given by Matz [Note 13], pp. 718 and 734. Or, even more horrific, the physical and emotional abuse Stifter's stepdaughter Juliane Mohaupt had to suffer by her stepparents, leading up to Juliane's suicide at the age of eighteen, as documented by Albrecht Koschorke (ibid.: Erziehung zum Freitod. Adalbert Stifters pädagogischer Realismus, in: Die Dinge und die Zeichen. Dimensionen des Realistischen in der Erzählliteratur des 19. Jahrhunderts, ed. Sabine Schneider, Barbara Hunfeld, Würzburg 2008, pp. 319–332).

¹⁶ Wolfgang Lukas: Geschlechterrolle und Erzählerrolle. Der Entwurf einer neuen Anthropologie in Adalbert Stifters Erzählung „Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters,“ in: Adalbert Stifter. Der Dichter und Maler, Denkmalpfleger und Schulmann, ed. Hartmut Laufhütte, Karl Möseneder, Tübingen 1996, pp. 374–394, here: pp. 378 and 388.

¹⁷ Alex Woloch: The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel, Princeton, Oxford 2003, p. 42.

We feel interest and outrage, painful concern or amused consent at what happens to minor characters: not simply their fate within the story [...] but also in the narrative discourse itself (how they are finally overshadowed or absorbed into someone else's story, swallowed within or expelled from another person's plot).¹⁸

As a minor character, Margarita is a narrative type that "enfolds the untold tale into the telling," thereby embodying an entryway into histories of the untold, the repressed; for Woloch, whose object of study are English and French Realism, this presents a democratizing potential of the realist novel.¹⁹ Yet in the case of Stifter's more conservative realism, the female minor character of Margarita appears rather to be the result of a deliberate shrinking of the feminine. Although we have to be cautious in regard to the idea of narrative objectivity, Wayne Booth assumes that for realist texts normally narrative "fairness"²⁰ serves as something like the guiding star. But how to judge an author's narrative fairness towards his characters? Booth can thus assert the following: "[T]his impression depends not on whether the author explicitly passes judgment but on whether the judgment he passes seems defensible in the light of the dramatized facts".²¹

IV. Betrayal Takes Two

When it comes to the 'facts' of the Margarita-episode and to the plot-line in which her (dis-)appearance is embedded, things appear in a haze: all we know is that the narrator Augustinus witnesses an intimate moment between Margarita and her cousin Rudolph. This narrative perspective of male voyeurism already has a certain effect insofar as information on the female character is framed in modes of observation and revelation; to speak with Deirdre Lynch: "The gendering that organizes the narratives makes female characters the targets of the narrative's drive to unmask and expose".²² Whenever we feel that something is exposed, we start to believe that *there is* something that could be exposed. This technique is especially pronounced in the first version of "Die Mappe" where we can only infer from Augustinus' account that Margarita has wronged him: "A woman, a disdainful, beautiful, terribly loved woman had made me so furious that I thought now I could not continue living, in order to really punish this false, this hard heart" (HKG 1/2, 15: "Ein Weib, ein schönes, schnödes, fürchterlich geliebtes Weib hatte mich dermaßen rasend gemacht, daß ich vermeinte, jetzt könne ich nicht mehr weiter leben, um es nur recht zu strafen das falsche, das harte Herz"). In the second, published version, this ac-

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 41–42.

²⁰ Wayne Booth: *The Rhetoric of Fiction* [1961], Chicago 1983, p. 78.

²¹ Ibid., p. 79.

²² Deirdre Shauna Lynch: *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning*, Chicago 1998, p. 100.

cusation gets more meat; Augustinus witnesses an intimate moment between Margarita and her cousin Rudolph in the forest: “He had her arm in his, she laid her hand on his, pressed it, and gently caressed it” (HKG 1/5, 177: “er hatte ihren Arm in dem seinigen, sie legte ihre Hand auf die seine, drückte sie, und streichelte dieselbe sanft”). Augustinus happens to see Rudolph and Margarita at ‘Margarita and his’ intimate spot in the forest; he observes how “[Rudolph] bowed down his face towards her [...]; she lifted her face towards him and kissed him on his mouth” (HKG 6/1, 154: “[D]ann neigte er sein Angesicht gegen sie nieder; [...] sie hob ihr Antlitz gegen ihn empor, und küßte ihn auf den Mund“). Notice the continuous disambiguation of the scene: whereas the first version is told by an impulsive, possibly unreliable narrator who does not ground his suspicion any further, in subsequent versions the bodily contact between Margarita and Rudolph becomes more and more pronounced, from caressing to kissing. Remarkably, between the four versions the protagonist reacts to this *increase* in injury with a *decrease* in affect. The opposite would be more intuitive: to be merely upset about suspecting that your lover betrays you but to be seriously hurt and outraged when you see, with your own eyes, your love in intimate contact. And yet, Stifter tells the story with an inverse-correlation between hurt and hurting, which suggests that jealously paranoid speculation is actually more painful than knowledge because phantasy is infinite and prolific whereas mere knowledge is finite.

In the final version, the Colonel informs Augustinus that the reason Margarita kissed her cousin was because Rudolph intended to end a family-feud and had asked her “to give him a kiss as a sign that she wanted to be his dear cousin” (HKG 6/2, 172). Horst Turk reads the various depictions of the couple as expressions of the narrator’s desire for self-exclusion and self-debasement by projecting unity on “the lovers”;²³ different from this view, Johannes John takes the Colonel’s interpretation at face-value regarding Augustinus’ reaction as a “consequential misunderstanding or jealous misinterpretation of the kiss in the forest”;²⁴ against this, Friedbert Aspetsberger objects that a ceremonial kiss of this kind ought to be given in front of family, not alone in the forest;²⁵ finally, Ulrich Püschel reminds us that we are dealing with a jealous narrator who therefore is unreliable.²⁶ What we can learn from this debate is that whenever in realism

²³ Horst Turk: Die Schrift als Ordnungsform des Erlebens. Diskursanalytische Überlegungen zu Adalbert Stifter, in: Diskurstheorien und Literaturwissenschaft, ed. Jürgen Fohrmann, Harro Müller, Frankfurt/Main 1988, pp. 400–417, here: pp. 408–409.

²⁴ Johannes John, Das ‘Margarita’-Kapitel in den verschiedenen Fassungen der „Mappe meines Urgrossvaters,“ in: Jahrbuch Adalbert-Stifter-Institut des Landes Oberösterreich 14, 2007, pp. 19–32, here: p. 21.

²⁵ Friedbert Aspetsberger: Die Aufschreibung des Lebens: Zu Stifters „Mappe,“ in: Vierteljahresschrift 27, 1978, no. 1–2, pp. 11–38, here: p. 22.

²⁶ Ulrich Püschel: Stifters Ur- und Studien-Mappe, in: Wirkendes Wort 43, 1993, no. 1, pp. 68–81, here: p. 71.

multiple representations are given of ‘one and the same’ event, this dissemination of description puts in question the very possibility of representation. Taken together, the two conflicting views of the kiss by Augustinus and the colonel form a “double exposure,” which as Eric Downing elucidates, is not a promise of the real but rather a repeatedly failing attempt to fix the real.²⁷ Given that the tableau from which the double exposure emanates is about betrayal, Stifter performatively produces the epistemological effects of betrayal insofar as the two competing interpretations of the kiss betray the very idea of ‘betrayal’ as something univocal. In more abstract terms, Stifter’s depiction of the kiss prevents us from stabilizing the concept of betrayal because the term does what it bespeaks, betraying our perception. Three moments support my reading: first, while plumbing the historical symbolism of the kiss at Stifter’s time, the commentary on “Die Mappe” ascertains that the kiss could have been equally plausibly understood as a “brother or sister kiss” or as a “wedding oath” (HKG 6/4, 442). Second, there is reference to a “wedding kiss” (HKG 1/2, 27: “Gattenkuß”) in “Die Mappe,” which the colonel gives his future wife, Margarita’s mother.

The third argument for the kiss-scene staging a crisis of representation is that the four stories in Stifter’s œuvre that most extensively deliberate on the affect of jealousy are contained in “Studien”: “Die Mappe,” “Brigitta,” “Der beschriebene Tännling,” and “Feldblumen”. Of these four texts, all but “Brigitta” contain a strikingly similar tableau of a kissing or caressing couple – a tableau that would be considered touching or beautiful, if one of the persons displaying affection were not the protagonist’s beloved. As fascinating as the repetitions of the tableau are their changing interpretations: in “Feldblumen” (1834), Albrecht observes his betrothed Angela with another, more attractive man and leaves her, which is a mistake because their familiarity turns out to be due to mere family bonds – the other man is Angela’s step-brother (who, however, holds deeper feelings for Angela). “Der beschriebene Tännling” (1836) plays through the opposite case, in which jealousy is justified, fleshing out a scenario in which the protagonist Hanns sees his love Hanna at a village-festivity with a richer, more beautiful aristocrat with whom she will eventually elope (HKG 1/6). Although Stifter generally returns to the same themes and constellations, the fact that he published all four of the texts dealing most intimately with jealousy in *one* collection gives us reason to believe that “Studien” constitutes a quasi-scientific *study* of the possible permutations of jealousy and the paranoia of betrayal. Stifter artfully evokes contradictory interpretations: he juxtaposes an increase in physical contact between Margarita and Rudolph with Margarita’s innocent demeanor; he juxtaposes Augustinus’ jealous reaction with the Colonel’s unsuspecting explanation; he includes the prolepsis of a ghost-light (*Irrlicht*) before the

²⁷ Eric Downing: Double Exposures: Repetition and Realism in Nineteenth-Century German Fiction, Stanford/CA 2000.

betrayal scene; finally, he embeds “Die Mappe” in a text-collection that features almost identical betrayal scenes with, however, opposite outcomes. Stifter was apparently eager to increase ambiguity to the utmost – a result, which contradicts those influential interpretations of the late versions of “Die Mappe” by Kunisch, Martini, and Müller who all emphasize its classical style and sense of closure.²⁸

V. Four Margaritas, Increasingly Sober

In order to get a sense of Stifter’s treatment of the Margarita-character, we followed Booth’s advice to measure the author’s narrative “fairness” towards his character against the “facts” presented in the plot; we concluded that it is impossible to determine the factual situation of Margarita and Rudolph tête-à-tête. This renders all the more important the manner in which Stifter depicts Margarita’s reaction to Augustinus’ jealousy. In the first version, after Augustinus has threatened her with suicide and asked his rival for a duel, Margarita calls off the engagement in a letter. When they meet again, Augustinus asks: “Margarita, [...] do we have to separate?” upon which she responds with hardly audible voice: “We must” (HKG 1/2, 40).

In the published version, Augustinus meets Margarita in her garden, she is dressed all in white, and welcomes him with great relief. Augustinus reproaches her: “Margarita, you don’t love me!”. She reacts surprised and asks him whether he is alright, assures him that she loves “cousin Rudolph [...] because that’s how it should be, but I love you more” (HKG 1/5, 180). Augustinus continues doubting her, Margarita falls silent and calls off the engagement the next day.

In the third version, Margarita is dressed in grey and is less life-like and more statuesque, as is typical of Stifter’s women.²⁹ Augustinus starts the conversation in a matter-of-fact manner: “Margarita, I saw today not intentionally but by accident how you kissed cousin Rudolph.” – “Yes, I kissed cousin Rudolph today.” – “And you tell me that without thinking of the rights you granted me?” Four days later, Augustinus returns, Margarita welcomes him and serenely ends their engagement: “You didn’t believe me. If I cannot find belief, I will stay with my beloved father” (HKG 6/1, 156). On Margarita’s theological, nay *protestant* demand for *sola fides*, Augustinus’ objection concerning her deed (HKG 6/2, 156: “I have always recognized you as truthful and yet I have seen

²⁸ Hermann Kunisch: Adalbert Stifter. Mensch und Wirklichkeit, Berlin 1950; Fritz Martini: Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters, in: Ibid.: Deutsche Literatur im bürgerlichen Realismus 1848–1898, Stuttgart 1981, pp. 552–556; Joachim Müller: Die letzte Mappe, in: Ibid.: Adalbert Stifter. Weltbild und Dichtung, Halle 1956, pp. 54–64.

²⁹ Begemann [Note 10], p. 66; thus, the petrification of Margarita follows the Stifterian script of ‘idealizing’ the female beloved as a statue – the most famous example for this strategy being Natalie from “Der Nachsommer”.

what you did”) ricochets back upon him. But Margarita’s verbal asceticism also destroys the literary text because it introduces a certain muteness that risks enveloping the rest of the text, a kind of nihilism which Benjamin in the “Trauerspiel”-book links to the reformation insofar as belief paradoxically displaces the world itself, which comes to seem arbitrary and senseless.³⁰

This becomes even more notable in the fourth version where Margarita’s language is still more abstract: “because now Everything has changed I have to tell you that it cannot happen any longer” (HKG 6/2, 146: “da nun Alles anders geworden ist, muß ich euch sagen, daß es nicht mehr geschehen kann”). Benveniste explains that only by way of certain verbs of operation that exclusively appear in the first person – like *I feel, believe, suppose, presume* – the speaking subject may take “a certain attitude with regard to the utterance that follows”.³¹ Margarita’s utterance is notably bereft of any such verb granting her subjectivity; rather, she *informs* Augustinus about what is dictated by nameless laws.

While both Augustinus and Margarita’s voices sound flat in the last versions of their dialogues, they embody opposite poles of *a-patheia*: whereas Augustinus is endowed with something like Stoic *ataraxia*³² (which also inspires Stifter’s “gentle law”³³), Augustinus criticizes Margarita’s apathy as cold and stubborn, suggesting that she displays a pathological inability to feel – a critique that resonates with similar warnings of the deadening effects of apathy formulated in German classical aesthetics.³⁴ The two forms of apathy align with two kinds of

³⁰ Walter Benjamin: Der Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels [1925], Frankfurt/Main 1974, pp. 317–318.

³¹ Émile Benveniste: Subjectivity in Language, in: *Ibid.*, Problems in General Linguistics [1966], translated by Mary Elizabeth Meek, Miami 1971, pp. 223–230, here: p. 228.

³² In “Analytik des Erhabenen,” Kant calls apathy sublime that overcomes the sensual: “Aber (welches befremdlich scheint) selbst Affektlosigkeit (apatheia, phlegma in significatu bono) eines seinen unwandelbaren Grundsätzen nachdrücklich nachgehenden Gemüts ist, und zwar auf weit vorzüglichere Art, erhaben, weil sie zugleich das Wohlgefallen der reinen Vernunft auf ihrer Seite hat” (Immanuel Kant: Kritik der Urteilskraft [= Kritik der reinen Vernunft. Kritik der praktischen Vernunft. Kritik der Urteilskraft. Ungekürzte Neuausgabe der historisch kritischen Gesamtausgabe], ed. J. R. Pegot, Wiesbaden 2003, p. 732).

³³ Adalbert Stifter: Preface to *Many-colored Stones*, translated by Jeffrey L. Sammons Lionel, in: *German Novellas of Realism*, ed. Jeffrey L. Sammons, vol. 1, New York 1989, pp. 1–6, here p. 3.

³⁴ To quote Lessing’s “Laokoon”: “Ich bekenne, dass ich an der Philosophie des Cicero überhaupt wenig Geschmack finde. [...] Man sollte glauben, er wolle einen Gladiator abrichten” (Gothold Ephraim Lessing: *Laokoon oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie*, Stuttgart 1986, p. 37[also p. 10]); see also Schiller’s “Über das Pathetische”: “Nirgends sucht der Grieche in der Abstumpfung und Gleichgültigkeit gegen das Leiden seinen Ruhm, sondern in Ertragung desselben bei allem Gefühl für dasselbe” (*Ibid.*: *Über das Pathetische*, in: *Schillers Werke. Nationalausgabe*, ed. Benno von Wiese, vol. 20/1, Weimar 1962, pp. 196–221, here: p. 198).

silence in Stifter distinguished by Eva Geulen: silence as an autonomous mode of articulation vs. silence as a deficient mode of speech³⁵ – keeping in mind that the Margarita-character and her “mannered behavior” are accused of the latter.³⁶

Did Stifter himself not know how to conclude the love story after he had so disfigured the female character? After the “Studien”-version Stifter was apparently no longer capable of writing a new afterword that would end the story by depicting the reconciliation between Augustinus or Margarita; the lovers instead remain estranged.³⁷ It appears as if even Stifter did not know how to undo the narrative violence that he had committed – the aggressive tow emerging from the Margarita-chapter slowly eroded the whole architecture of the novelistic project and left it a fragment.

VI. The Good Margarita and the Bad Margarita

In the last version, Augustinus leaves Margarita frustrated, describing her with contradictory adjectives as “heartless,” “fixed,” “stubborn,” and “soft,” “flexible” (HKG 6/1, 161).³⁸ We could also say that Margarita’s character has become a riddle; Margarita – just like the statue of Saint Margaretha whom the children in “Die Mappe” so fear – has something “Rätselhaftes”³⁹ about her. “The character as riddle” goes back to Max Kommerell’s description of Kleist’s characters, who interrupt the fiction of the organic character: “the character can be a riddle to itself, a riddle to its partner, to their environment, to us”.⁴⁰ Drama, Kommerell stipulates, proceeds “from the presentation of the riddle to the solving of the riddle. Still, something of the riddle remains; or a solved riddle loses itself in the abyss of a new riddle; the solved riddle of one character can render ambiguous in turn the character who solves it”.⁴¹ In the case of the Margarita-plot, it is Augustinus who paradoxically *solves* the riddle of Margarita’s charac-

³⁵ Eva Geulen: *Worthörig wider Willen. Darstellungsproblematik und Sprachreflexion in der Prosa Adalbert Stifters*, München 1992, pp. 42–43.

³⁶ Aspetsberger [Note 25], p. 22.

³⁷ The editors justify “the changes in the love-narrative” with “Stifter’s vehement critic of attitudes towards sexual love in the contemporary literature” (e.g. Schlegel). But then why is there an increase in the display of bodily affection between Margarita and Rudolph, from holding hands to kissing (HKG 6/4, 201)?

³⁸ Benjamin picks up on this kind of inconsistency when commenting of Stifter’s female characters that their “cunningly hidden demonic character carries the innocent look of simplicity” (Walter Benjamin: *Stifter*, in: *Ibid.: Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, Hermann Schwepenhäuser, vol. 2/2, Frankfurt/Main 1977, pp. 608–610, here: p. 608).

³⁹ Joachim Müller: *Einige Gestaltzüge in Stifters ‘Letzter Mappe’*, in: *Adalbert Stifter. Studien und Interpretationen. Gedenkschrift zum 100. Todestag*, Heidelberg 1968, pp. 245–270, here: p. 260.

⁴⁰ Max Kommerell: *Geist und Buchstabe der Dichtung*, Frankfurt/Main 1956, p. 246.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

ter by portraying her as a riddle. But this indeed also makes Augustinus more ambiguous by drawing attention to the fact that the cost of his sublimation-story is the ambiguation of the female character: Augustinus' sublimation only appears remarkable against the backdrop of an increasingly hurtful situation as well as an increasingly loveless, female Other.

What is a character? According to both William Empson and his student Stephen Orgel, character is just *one* "linguistic and poetic structure" among many.⁴² In the course of the four versions of Stifter's "Mappe" one textual structure takes over the narrative and affective space previously inhabited by other textual structures. One could also say: the text-structure 'Augustinus' is becoming *greedy*. According to Melanie Klein, greed is related to both envy and jealousy. The turn to Klein prompts a change of registers and allows us to approach Stifter's poetics of jealousy in a more speculative manner. Jealousy presents the affect at the basis of the Margarita-story: Augustinus is jealous of Rudolph because he feels that Rudolph and Margarita make the perfect couple: "A more beautiful couple hardly exists on earth. [...] Bitter tears streamed from my eyes – who am I – what am I? – I am nothing – nothing –" (HKG 1/5, 177: "Ein schöneres Paar ist gar nicht auf der Erde. [...] Mir stürzten die bitteren Thränen aus den Augen – wer bin ich denn – was bin ich denn? – ich bin nichts – gar nichts –").

When reading Stifter we must resist the pull of a heteronormative hermeneutics. This means taking into account that the 'real' object of desire might not be Margarita (alone) but (also, or) rather, the handsome Rudolph or indeed Margarita's father, the Colonel, which would make Margarita the rival who has to be destroyed – via, for instance, devastating descriptions. Margarita would then share a fate with Stifter's character Brigitta (with the novella "Brigitta" in "Studien" presenting the tamed version of the more explicitly homoerotic journal-version that appeared in the 1844-almanac "Gedenke Mein!"). In both texts, the woman oscillates between beautiful and ugly, warm and cold; she is sometimes the object of desire, sometimes an unwelcome rival competing for a handsome male object of desire.

Klein explains that "[j]ealousy is mainly concerned with love that the subject feels is his due and has been taken away, or is in danger of being taken away, from him by his rival".⁴³ Jealousy is based on envy, with envy leading back to the first object relation to the mother's breast: "the good and the bad breast,"⁴⁴ the breast that nurtures, the breast that leaves the infant craving. Klein assumes that the aggression that the infant feels towards the denied breast results in

⁴² Stephen Orgel: What Is a Character?, in: Text 8, 1995, pp. 101–108, here: p. 102.

⁴³ Melanie Klein: Envy and Gratitude, in: Ibid.: Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946–1963, New York 1975, pp. 176–235, here: p. 181.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 179.

aggression and the spoiling of the breast through the infant. Still in the second version, Augustinus laments how he lost his mother early in childhood (HKG 1/5, 178). Here, Margarita appears as the ‘good breast,’ so to speak: when Augustinus tells her that she does not love him, she asks (like a mother): “Have you had anything to eat yet?” He answers, like a child: “No, I haven’t eaten yet.” – Margarita: “Well, [...] then you’ll have to eat something right now.” – Augustinus: “I won’t eat anything [...] I want to tell you something, that you love cousin Rudolph much, much more than me” (HKG 1/5, 180). According to Klein, the “ambivalent attitude towards the breast” is expressed in “suspicion of the gift [one] wishe[s] to receive because the object was already spoilt by envy and hatred, and at the same time deep resentment about every frustration”.⁴⁵ From a Kleinian perspective, Margarita appears in the last versions as the bad breast, offering neither food nor words of consolation: “The more one reads these pages, the more one is disturbed by Margarita’s language [...] her words withhold all meaning,” comment Erika and Martina Swales.⁴⁶ The idea of withholding of language as withholding nourishment – a “missing resonance of the maternal position” – also informs Marianne Schuller’s psychoanalytic reading of Stifter’s autobiographic fragment “Mein Leben”.⁴⁷

VII. On the Epistemology of Jealousy

Speaking of autobiography, “Die Mappe” is frequently counted among Stifter’s texts that “refer in the most immediate and most complex manner to the author’s life,” as the editors Silvia Bengesser and Herwig Gottwald put it (HKG 6/4, 151); similarly, Walter Hettche claims that “Die Mappe” forces us to reconsider Stifter as a “psychogenetic author”.⁴⁸ In spite of this, some of the most striking biographical threads have not been taken up yet due to influential Stifter-scholars like Martini who are invested in the phantasy of Stifter’s sublimation-powers.⁴⁹ One of the autobiographic threads that has been left dangling leads from “Die Mappe” to Stifter’s letters to Franziska Greipl, aka “Fanny,” his first (some say *only*) love. At the beginning of the 20th century, Hans Hartmann and Josef Laubmann – both editors of “Die Mappe” – drew attention to the striking parallels between Augustinus’ and Margarita’s conversations and the correspondence of the young Stifter to Fanny, concluding: “Blind jealousy destroyed the pure relationship in the poetic text, the same passion also caused

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 205.

⁴⁶ Swales [Note 7], p. 133.

⁴⁷ Marianne Schuller: *Schrift – Male. Zu späten Texten Adalbert Stifters*, in: Ibid.: *Von Freud und Lacan aus: Literatur, Medien, Übersetzen: zur ‘Rücksicht auf Darstellbarkeit’ in der Psychoanalyse*, Bielefeld 2006, pp. 13–27, here: pp. 22 and 25.

⁴⁸ Walter Hettche: ‘Dichten’ oder ‘Machen’?, in: *Stifter-Studien*, ed. Walter Hettche, Johannes John, Sibylle von Steinsdorff, Tübingen 2000, pp. 75–86, here: p. 77.

⁴⁹ Martini [Note 28], p. 555, alleges that Stifter’s *Erziebertum* was so strong that nothing of the author’s psyche leaked into his literary creations.

the poet's unhappiness".⁵⁰ Thematic overlaps (doubt, jealousy, and the demand to believe) as well as repetitions of words and formulations amount to a veritable echo-effect between "Die Mappe" and Stifter's letters to Fanny (hers have been lost or destroyed). The relationship with Fanny ends in 1835, six years before the "Journalfassung" was finished; when Stifter fears that she is about to break up with him, he starts reminiscing how her love has made him more gentle (*großmütiger und sanfter*) and cured him of suicidal phantasies – at least for as long as she does not renege on their love: "If I no longer have you, well, then I have no interest in the world anymore. [...] [T]hen it's too late for me – but [...] may heaven preserve you and make you happy, then I too will try to transfer the love that is yours now onto my work and onto humanity."⁵¹ ("Bist Du für mich hin: nun dann liegt mir auch nichts mehr an der Welt. [...] [D]ann ist es für mich zu spät – doch [...] möge der Himmel Dich bewahren und glücklich machen, dann will auch ich versuchen, die Liebe, die nun Dein ist, überzutragen auf meine Arbeiten, und auf die Menschheit.") It is striking that both Margarita's father (*Der sanftmütige Obrist*, a title combining the adjectives *großmütig* and *sanft* from Stifter's letter) and Augustinus, upon having lost their beloved, learn to tame their passions and live a serene life dedicated to the common good.

"A foreigner will come and will lead your heart with a cold hand [...] – my heart breaks"⁵² the young, jealous Stifter phantasizes; she is offended by his mistrust and jealousy, by his obscene phantasies of her having an affair with "a stranger," that during carnival someone jumbled her décolleté (*Busentuch*), or that "the false neighbor, or the willful hands of the warrior [...] destroyed his possession".⁵³ When Fanny responds in a tone that strikes Stifter as short and cool, he tries to undo the damage by rationalizing his jealous affects:

In another passage of your letter you say: that my friendship must have cooled off because I mistrust yours. Will you call that mistrust when a man possesses a gem (indeed does not even possess it, but most eagerly longs to obtain it) and if hence he keeps an eye on this gem, and whenever there is a situation that runs danger of threatening his possession he most anxiously thinks that he is about to lose it – could you really call that mistrust? Whoever, during all of this, is able to stay indifferent – that man does not love. [...] Therefore you may really forgive me my doubts and worries, they are children of sincere affection.

⁵⁰ Hans Hartmann, Josef Laubmann: Die Mappe meines Urgroßvaters. Einleitung, in: Adalbert Stifters Sämtliche Werke, ed. Rudolf Frieß, Hans Hartmann, Josef Laubmann, vol. 2, Prag 1908, pp. XLVII–LXXIII, here: p. LVIII.

⁵¹ Adalbert Stifter: Letter to Franziska Greipl, Nov. 25, 1829, [Note 14], pp. 20–25, here: pp. 24–25.

⁵² Adalbert Stifter, Letter to Franziska Greipl, Oct. 1, 1829, [Note 14], pp. 15–20, here: p. 17.

⁵³ Adalbert Stifter to Franziska Greipl in a letter from Feb. 14, 1830, [Note 14], pp. 25–28, here: p. 27.

Eine andere Stelle in Deinem Schreiben sagt: daß meine Freundschaft erkaltet sein musses, da ich Mißtrauen in die Deinige setzte. Wirst Du das Mißtrauen nennen, wenn ein Mann ein Kleinod besitzt, ja noch nicht einmal besitzt, sondern es sehnlichst zu erlangen wünschet, und er nun dies Kleinod wie sein Auge wahret, und es ängstlichst gleich zu verlieren glaubt, sobald ein Umstand eintritt, der seinem Besitze Gefahr zu drohen scheint – wirst du dies Mißtrauen nennen können? Wer dabei gleichgültig bleiben kann, ob sein Freund ihm schreibt, oder nicht schreibt – der liebt nicht. [...] Du darfst mir daher meine Zweifel und Besorgnisse schon verzeihen, es sind Kinder einer aufrichtigen Neigung.⁵⁴

Stifter performs a quasi-Nietzschean transvaluation of values with regard to jealousy: to love is to seek possession of someone and whoever is not worried about losing this possession does not love – which is to say: jealousy is love. This reasoning is in line with reflections on jealousy by the medical philosopher Philipp Carl Hartmann, whom Stifter read as a student, and who classifies jealousy “as one of the most twisted passions”;⁵⁵ like Stifter, Hartmann solely focuses on the male gendered, “unhappy one” who experiences fits of jealousy and roams in circles of “love and hate, fear, sadness, and remorse” and excuses jealousy as one of the “noble affects and passions” because it “stands in proximity to the highest good”.⁵⁶ Stifter will employ the same argumentation not only in correspondence with Fanny but also in “Feldblumen,” where the female character Angela is left by Albrecht from one day to the other; once she learns, however, that Albrecht hurt her out of jealousy, Angela comforts him: “Love cannot wrong” (HKG 1/4, 164: “Liebe verbricht nichts”).

Another striking feature of the quoted letter is the frequent use of the word “possession” (*in Besitz haben, besitzen*). Apart from the word attesting to an objectifying, controlling attitude towards women, the wish to ‘have’ something bespeaks the desire for certainty – a certainty that Stifter constantly feels to be lacking. In the letter to Fanny from February 1830 Stifter wonders: “If I have doubts about you? Not yet: but you are a riddle to me, I am mad [*irre*] and, frankly, at the border of doubt [*an der Grenze des Zweifels*].”⁵⁷ The same tortured thought reappears in the last versions of “Die Mappe”:

How could I be your wholeheartedly intimate wife if you don’t believe me? [...] Belief is a gift that one either has or doesn’t have. And even if you believed me for as long as we live, I wouldn’t know it and always think that one day you might not believe me.

⁵⁴ Adalbert Stifter to Franziska Greipl in a letter from May 15, 1829, [Note 14], pp. 9–15, here: p. 10.

⁵⁵ Philipp Carl Hartmann: *Der Geist des Menschen in seinen Verhältnissen zum physischen Leben, oder Grundzüge zu einer Physiologie des Menschen*, Vienna 1820, p. 46; see also HKG 6/4, 444.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 46–47.

⁵⁷ Adalbert Stifter to Franziska Greipl in a letter from Feb. 14, 1830, [Note 14], p. 27.

Wie könnte ich euer rückhaltlos vertrautes Weib sein, wenn ihr mir nicht glaubtet? [...] Der Glaube ist ein Geschenk, das man hat, oder nicht hat. Und wenn ihr mir auch glaubtet, so lange wir leben, so würde ich es nicht wissen, und immer denken, ihr könntet mir doch einmal nicht glauben. (HKG 6/2, 148)

Stifter strips communication down to its bones until nothing is left from being-with-each-other than two skeletons reaching out to each other to no avail. The hopeless communication-situation is coupled with a seemingly inhumane religious demand: just as in his last letter to Fanny Stifter calls her “the Saint [*die Heilige*] to which my better self prayed,”⁵⁸ Margarita is depicted in the last version of “Die Mappe” as a merciless goddess who requests from Augustinus that he convert and embrace absolute belief, without however forgiving him past sins. The ostensibly odd mixture of religiosity and romantic interpersonal contingency goes right to the heart of the problem of *double contingency* as presented by Luhmann, via Blumenberg. According to Blumenberg, contingency is a concept of Christian descent because a “world that has been created can always be thought of as being created otherwise.”⁵⁹ Likewise, when communicating with one another we are always simultaneously relying on and reacting to the Other’s selections of possibilities for communication, and the only mechanism that reduces contingency in communication is symbolic media, i.e. cultural conventions. If these however are missing then we have a communication situation like that found in the last version of “Die Mappe”: a fallen state of “A Lover’s Discourse”⁶⁰ channeling a fallen state of Christianity – “two individuals gesturing toward each other without a symbolic medium of communication,” to speak with Rüdiger Campe.⁶¹

VIII. Lurid Figures

What makes it so difficult to believe? Stifter overstretches the problem of doubt and belief from the religious to the interpersonal realm. From this, the figure of the paranoid lover arises. However, in the case of Adalbert and Fanny, mutual distrust, repeated accusations, and grievances turn out not to be simply the off-spring of their phantasies: according to the Stifter-biographer Matz, Adalbert and Fanny’s friends attempted several times to separate the two by telling each of them that the other had found another love-interest.⁶² We can still find traces of these haunting fabrications in Stifter’s letter from May 15, 1829:

⁵⁸ Adalbert Stifter to Franziska Greipl in a letter from Aug. 20.1835, [Note 14], pp. 36–40, here: p. 38.

⁵⁹ Rüdiger Campe: Contingencies in Blumenberg and Luhmann, in: *Telos* 158, 2012, pp. 81–99, here: p. 91.

⁶⁰ Roland Barthes: *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments* [1977], translated by Richard Howard, New York 2010.

⁶¹ Rüdiger Campe: Contingencies in Blumenberg and Luhmann, [Note 59], p. 97.

⁶² Wolfgang Matz: *Adalbert Stifter oder Diese fürchterliche Wendung der Dinge*. Biographie, München 1995, p. 101.

Tell me, for heaven's sake, how did you get the idea that I've changed? [...] Your brother [...] wrote to me that in Friedberg people think that I won't come up to Friedberg during future vacation because I would stay here because of a girl. I have to laugh about and get angry about this bizarre opinion.

Sage mir doch um des Himmels willen, wie bist Du denn auf den Gedanken gekommen, zu meinen, ich habe mich geändert? [...] Dein Bruder [...] hat mir geschrieben, daß in Friedberg die Meinung herrscht, daß ich künftige Ferien nicht hinauf kommen werde, weil ich wegen einem Mädchen hier bleiben werde. Ich muß lachen und mich ärgern über diese bizarre Meinung.⁶³

After considerable suffering, Fanny and Adalbert find out about these fabrications. Could these acts of dissimulation 'explain' the obsessive re-telling of the incident between Rudolph and Margarita, i.e. the potential scene of betrayal that resulted in endless double exposures? Since the "Studien"-version, a "ghost light" (HKG 1/5, 154; HKG 1/6, 150; HKG 6/2, 139: "Irrlicht") precedes Margarita's confession of love towards Augustinus as well as her display of affection towards Rudolph; the phantom-light puts a question mark *before* Margarita's love and thus unfolds a similar effect as the double exposure of Augustinus' and the Colonel's readings of Margarita's kiss.

Likewise, in both "Die Mappe" and Stifter's last letter there is talk of a "confused" or "misled feeling" that should never have emerged (HKG 6/1, 159: "das verworrene Gefühl"; "Verirrung meines Gefühls" in the letter to Fanny).⁶⁴ There exists the widespread belief, almost superstition, that the author's biography has the capacity of literalizing interpretation – but rather than taking the biography as that which is the grounds for something else, in "Die Mappe" we have no less than four different ways of working through an as yet uncomprehended biographic detail. If we look for ways to conceptualize Stifter's nightmarish tableau of the beautiful couple, then Neil Hertz' "Lurid Figures" come to our aid: Hertz' attempt to grasp the terrifying images of hanging figures that are "obliquely inscribed at various points in [de Man's] writings – a tableau of uncertain agency".⁶⁵ Hertz defines this rhetorical praxis as an "end-of-the-line figuration" because the figures stand at the end of a quest narrative, waiting for the reader as a horrifying find.⁶⁶

⁶³ Adalbert Stifter in a letter to Franziska Greipl from May 15, 1829, [Note 14], pp. 9–15, here: p. 14.

⁶⁴ Adalbert Stifter in a letter to Franziska Greipl from Aug. 20, 1835, [Note 14], p. 39.

⁶⁵ Neil Hertz: More Lurid Figures, in: *Diacritics* 20, 1990, no. 3, pp. 2–27, here: pp. 9 and 7.

⁶⁶ Just like the young de Man found his mother's hanged body, one year after his brother died in an accident (*ibid.*, p. 7).

Obsessional concerns will find expression in what I have been calling lurid figures, and the covert narratives of violence or eroticism these imply are, de Man has argued, “defensive motion[s] of the understanding,” ways of imposing intelligibility on otherwise baffling operations of language.⁶⁷

In the end it is Stifter himself who merges into the tableau of the cheating lover when he has an affair with Amalia Mohaupt, his future-wife. Stifter, again, had been misinformed by ‘friends’ that Fanny found another love-interest in the good-looking medical student Wenzel Huber. In his last letter to Fanny, Adalbert makes an attempt to explain that he cheated out of jealousy, begging her to believe in his love – in spite of the obvious. Fanny remains silent.

When they said that you would marry Huber the spirit of jealousy got into me and the plan was made to forget you and everything passed. [...] It was wounded vanity – I wanted to show your bunch that after all I knew how to find a beautiful, wealthy, and noble woman – ah, and almost broke my heart during this experiment!

Als sie sagten: Du werdest Huber heiraten, fuhr der Geist der Eifersucht in mich, und da wurde der Plan gedacht, Dich und alle Vergangenheit zu vergessen [...]. Gekränkte Eitelkeit war es – zeigen wollt’ ich Eurem Haufen, daß ich doch ein schönes, wohlhabendes und edles Weib zu finden wußte – ach, und hätte über dem Experimente bald mein Herz gebrochen!⁶⁸

What is at issue here is that Stifter inhabits *all* of the affective positions presented in the literary text: Augustinus’ jealousy and mistrust but also Margarita’s sexual desire, her deceit and at the same time her demand for trust and belief. The fact that Stifter is able to feel through all of these conflicting affects shows *how literary the biographic is* and how complex.⁶⁹ It thus stands in comical contradiction to Stifter’s litotes about his works being nothing more than “the simple representation of feelings of a simple life” (HKG 8/1, 34). In view of this insight, I would like to reconceptualize my previous claims: for only if we think of the character-economy of the Margarita-chapter in terms of movements of expansion and contraction, we come to see that an expansion takes place with Stifter occupying all the characters, and that at the same time a contraction occurs with Stifter’s dis-identifying with certain parts of this complex poly-subject – notably, the character of Margarita. This dis-identification violently diminishes both the queerness of feeling and the promiscuity of the text.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

⁶⁸ Adalbert Stifter to Franziska Greipl in a letter from Aug. 20.1835, [Note 14], p. 37.

⁶⁹ Alfred Doppler reads Stifter’s letters – including his letters to Fanny – as displaying both techniques of self-censorship and self-invention (ibid.: Adalbert Stifters Briefe als Dokumente der Selbstdarstellung, in: Stifter und Stifterforschung im 21. Jahrhundert, ed. ibid. a.o., Tübingen 2007, pp. 1–12, here: pp. 3–4).

IX. The True Maidenhood

The aggression that Stifter attributes to the female character is double-binding: Margarita triggers Augustinus' jealousy and, withdrawing, at the same time demands from him not to be jealous. I think we can safely say that the Margarita-character is too ambiguous or demonic to be considered a 'feminine ideal' (even when viewed from within a twisted, misogynist world of longing women as statues). And yet, whenever we read male authors the question arises of how a given female character is to be situated on a normative scale, in relation to an imagined 'ought' of womanhood. In this regard, Begemann points out a quasi-law in Stifter, according to which men idealize women and women fail to reach the 'feminine ideal'.⁷⁰ Therefore, we have to wonder whether there in fact exists a woman in Stifter's oeuvre who succeeds where Margarita fails, inviting desire but not jealousy.

One would think that Stifter's praise of a woman for her "goodness and purity of the heart" sounds pretty ideal. The woman in question is Louise Freifrau von Eichendorff, sister of Joseph Eichendorff. In a letter, von Eichendorff had complained to Stifter that people were taking advantage of her hospitality, crowding her garden. Stifter distinguishes his own motives for befriending von Eichendorff: "goodness and purity of the heart [...]. That is, to speak with Othello, all the magic. Here there seems to be no other self-interest than that it is a good feeling to love someone." ("Güte und Herzensreinheit [...]. Das ist, mit Othello zu reden, der ganze Zauber. Hier ist wohl kein anderer Eigennutz als der, daß es ein wohltuendes Gefühl ist, jemanden zu lieben.")⁷¹ He then gives von Eichendorff instructions on how to banish the intruders. Stifter inhabits the position of Othello, i.e. the jealous husband who at the beginning of Shakespeare's tragedy gently quashes objections that he had used witchcraft to win Desdemona's heart. He then identifies von Eichendorff with Desdemona whose "sweetest innocen[ce]" and modesty is praised throughout the play ("A maiden never bold, / Of spirit so still and quiet that her motion/ blushed at herself").⁷² These virtues, however, turn out to be just the other side of Desdemona's fatal cluelessness in the face of jealousy; Stifter appears to suggest that Desdemona as well as von Eichendorff embody a female pureness of the heart that proves itself only in readiness to be murdered.

Another female appears in Stifter's oeuvre who promises to unknot the double bind of desire without jealousy: "the true maidenhood (*Frauenehre*), who always victoriously spurns the tempter, although she has no weapon besides her simple being" (HKG 8/1, 46: "die wahre Frauenehre, die den Versucher immer

⁷⁰ Begemann [Note 10], p. 148.

⁷¹ Adalbert Stifter in a letter to Louise Freifrau von Eichendorff, Oct. 27, 1859, [Note 13], pp. 226–229, here: p. 227.

⁷² William Shakespeare: *Othello*, in: *The Arden Shakespeare*, ed. Harold Jenkins, London, New York 1982, 5.2, 206 and 1.3, 94–95.

siegreich von sich weis't, obwohl sie keine andere Waffe hat, als ihr einfaches Dasein.") The place where this unlikely figure makes its appearance is in "Über Stand und Würde des Schriftstellers." It is here that Stifter calls on the writer to "master his passions, yes, even that he should not have them anymore" (HKG 8/1, 43) in order to achieve in his literature "the utmost purity and perfection" (HKG 8/1, 38). Among those passions to be fought – lust, imperiousness, jealousy, and envy – jealousy is the one that is of central concern to Stifter, so much so that he returns to jealousy at the end of the essay: in taking on the notorious question of "dilettantism," Stifter calls on "the noble and great" authors to repel all writers who lack a true calling (HKG 8/1, 46). Great writers should form one homosocial body: the queer allegory of "true maidenhood" (HKG 8/1, 46). With this, the impossible phantasy of a most desirable but inaccessible female acquires flesh – and we are left with the staggering thought that, after all, the best women are men.

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